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IN THE DRESSES.



OR
A DROP OF BOSTON BLUE BLOOD.
BY
WM. R. THAYER.



From THE HARVARD LAMPOON.

CHAS. W. SEVER, PUBLISHER. CAMBRIDGE MASS.

IN THE MESHES;

OR,

A DROP OF BOSTON BLUE BLOOD.

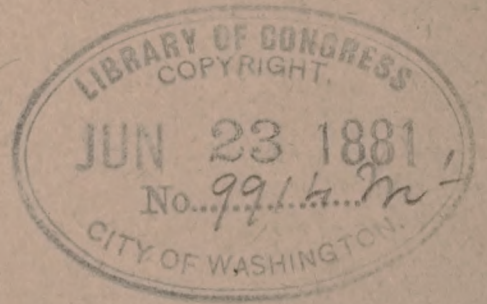
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BY W. R. THAYER.

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FROM THE HARVARD LAMPOON.

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TO THE IBIS.

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IN THE MESHES.

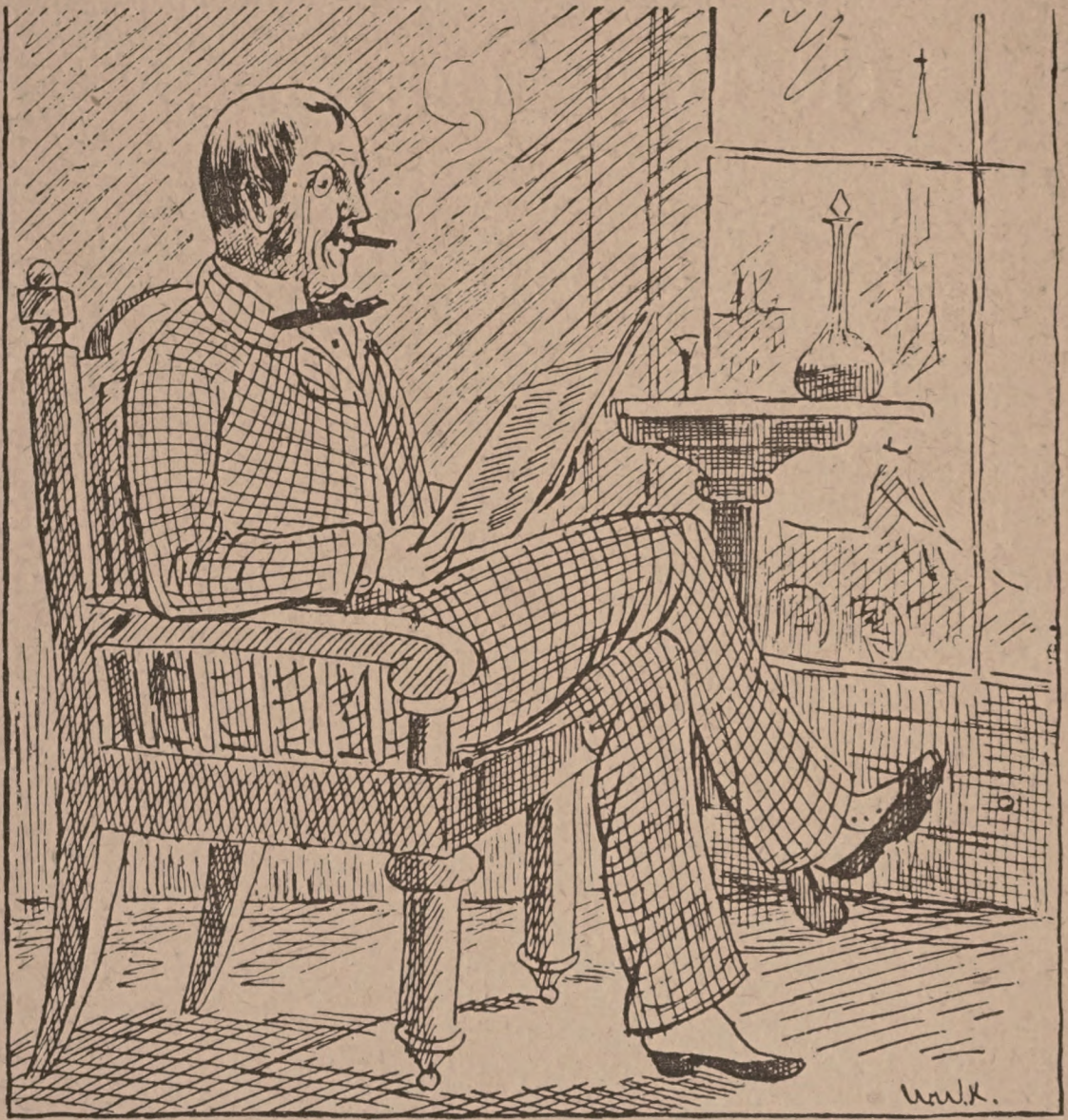
CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH THE HERO IS INTRODUCED.



R. MAYFLOWER SPEEDWELL was sitting in an easy-chair in one of the bow-windows of the Somerset Club. It was four in the afternoon, and Mr. Speedwell was looking over the last number of *Punch*. He was the very essence of an aristocratic gentleman. His age verged on

fifty. His hair, which had already disappeared from the crown of his head, was of reddish tint, plentifully



MAYFLOWER SPEEDWELL AT THE SOMERSET CLUB.

sprinkled with gray. His whiskers, carefully combed out on either side of his face, suggested the typical whiskers of the Briton. His cheeks were somewhat puffed and ruddy, mayhap with the bracing air of Boston, mayhap with the port and madeira of the Club cellar. A double chin was already more than a possibility in Mr. Speedwell's development. The rest of his countenance was not particularly noteworthy, and this added to his general aristocratic air. His clothes were large and faultlessly in style, but withal could not be called comely.

As he read, with a monocle wedged into the cavity of his right eye, he seemed very uncomfortable; indeed, one or two young Club men of a later generation hinted that Mr. S. wore the glass for show, and really used his left eye for reading; but this is immaterial. Mr. S., unlike most of his countrymen, found the dismal jokes in *Punch* remarkably amusing. He even was known to laugh over them as immoderately as was consistent with his aristocratical breeding. But the Club cynics unkindly hinted that he did not understand them, an insinuation pronounced to be calumny by those who knew him best. If Mr. Speedwell did not know English manners and customs to the very core, who could do so? Had he not made the famous season of 1867 in company with his bosom friend,

Lord Fiddle Faddle? Had he not shot stags in Scotland with the Duke of Roxburgh, and landed trout in Skye with Prince Leopold? And as for Devonshire, and the Fens, and the Isle of Wight, who had more racy personal adventures to relate about them all than he?

Mr. Speedwell languidly dropped *Punch* on the floor, — a smile, caused by that doosid fine caricature of “Dizzy,” lighting up his affable countenance, — took a cheroot from a Russia leather cigar-case, and called to the waiter for a light. He had taken a few puffs from the Manila weed, when two gentlemen approached him.

The elder, a man of forty, spoke a few hurried words to him in an undertone, and then aloud he introduced “Lord Playthenave — Mr. Mayflower Speedwell.” The latter gentleman had already risen from his chair. He now moved forward and affably stretched out his hand to his lordship.

“I am really delighted to make your lordship’s acquaintance,” quoth he, in an accent allowed to be correctly English — by all who had never heard a real Briton speak.

“Ah, really you are too good,” replied the distinguished visitor. “You fellers in the States are the most ’ospitable set I ever saw. And as for Boston,

gad, I never was as well recêived in Lunnun, amongst my own people, as I 'ave been 'ere."

Mr. Speedwell's face was aglow with pleasure. The sound of the pure English accent was as cheering to him as it must have been to Robinson Crusoe the first time he heard it after twenty years' solitude on Juan Fernandez.

Chairs were drawn around a little table, wine was brought, and the three gentlemen engaged in a highly interesting conversation.

"You have not been here long, I presume?" inquired Mr. Speedwell.

"Oh dear, no; I landed this morning by the Cunarder. We 'ad a doosid rough passage for this time of year. One 'ardly hexpects to meet hicebergs in May, you know; and as for whales, they did nothing but foller us hover the 'ole way. I got into a trap with my luggage and drove to the 'Brunswick,' where I find things comfortable enough; but, would you believe it, those careless porters quite ruined my 'at-bath in carrying it hup stairs."

"Ah, your lordship," replied Mr. Speedwell, in a conciliatory tone, "you will indeed find the service in this country wretched; we have nothing to compare with the excellent system in the United Kingdom. But how is it in London this season,—gay and delightful, I have no doubt?"

"Yes, we 'ave 'ad more or less jollity. Wales gave a very fine levee, which I hattended, — Wales and I are great cronies, you know, — and there was also a rout at the Duchess of Slopshire's. The hopera, they said, was fine, — I don't care much for music myself; and the trotting meets at Hepsom were hespecially crowded."

"Trotting at Epsom?" inquired the third gentleman of the party, who had hitherto been a listener to the conversation, occupied in quaffing madeira in that familiar and important way which at once stamps the true wine connoisseur. "Trotting at Epsom?" he repeated. "Why, I thought all the races there were running races."

"Oh, no, Leverett, by no means," broke in Mr. Speedwell, whose innate respect for the truthfulness of the English nobility now thrust him forward as Lord Playthenave's corroborator; "I certainly remember in the spring of '72 seeing a very fair exhibition of trotting there, though, to tell you the truth, I much prefer *our* old English custom of running."

It was quite pardonable in Mr. S. to emphasize the "our" a trifle, for who was more thoroughly English in heart, mind, dress, and aspiration, than he? You could not help feeling that it was his misfortune, and not his fault, that he could not claim an Englishman's birthright as well.

Mr. Leverett, finding that he could not compete with the gentlemen before him in the present topics, resumed his office of wine-taster with extreme good grace. In that, at least, he was at home, and like a truly wise man he contented himself with being proficient in his chosen profession. His lordship and Mr. Speedwell continued their conversation in much the same style as has been shown above,—the former fairly loading his sentences with the names of the noble persons who were not merely his acquaintances, but his bosom friends and relations; the latter recalling, as far as he could, the scenes and persons whom he had met in his frequent trips to London. Several other gentlemen joined the circle, and listened eagerly to the words of the noble visitor with the respect that was due to them.

Finally, Mr. Leverett, who had introduced Lord Playthenave to the Club, and put him up there, proposed a game of billiards, to which the latter gracefully acquiesced. Mr. Speedwell graciously shook his hand and bowed him from the room, hoping, at the same time, to have the pleasure of seeing his “dear friend on many other occasions.” Then he turned to the library, took Burke’s “Peerage” from the shelves, and turned over the leaves till he found there on page 378: “Playthenave, Marquis: family of Sussex; created Earl

by Henry II.; Marquis by Richard III., 1484." And a little farther down: "Philip Adolphus Fitz-Eustace Rodomont, 19th Marquis."

"Bravo!" he exclaimed involuntarily; and one or two who happened to be in the Club at that time say that it was sublime to see how he appeared to be ten times the man after that pleasing discovery that he was before.

CHAPTER II.

IN WHICH THE HERO RISES LATE.



IN the next morning, Philip Adolphus Fitz-Eustace Rodomont, Lord Playthenave, awoke from his slumber at the reasonable hour of eleven. And why not "the reasonable hour"? Does not the day-laborer crawl from his cot before daybreak, drag

on his patched clothes, partake of a slim breakfast, and trudge through the damp morning air, dinner-pail in hand, to his toil? Does not the tradesman rise at seven, and the portly banker at eight? Surely, then, a real live marquis owes it to his rank to bide in his couch at least three hours longer than the common

herd ; and the reader will find, if he has not made the discovery already, that Lord Playthenave was far too fine a gentleman to commit any breach of etiquette in this respect.

His lordship performed the usual contortions of a person just awaking from a heavy sleep. He first opened one eye ; then yawned ; then opened both eyes, and stretched himself. Almost involuntarily his hand rested upon his forehead, which was throbbing lustily.

"Confound that port," he murmured to himself. His lordship was by no means in a pleasant humor, and he called out in a peevish tone, "Tagg ! Tagg, I say ! Come in 'ere, you dog !" The person thus referred to stalked into the chamber, pulled aside the bed-curtains, and remarked in a familiar way, "How's yer 'ead ? Don't scold me because you're hunder the weather. *I* did n't get you tipsy."

"Who did, then ?" inquired the marquis, less sulkily.

"I don't know. It was three when you came 'ome, which I am sure I could n't 'elp. I put you to bed. Will you get up now ?"

"Yes," replied the victim of club port, trying to arrange in his mind, in a connected form, the scenes of the previous afternoon and evening. Tagg helped

him from the bed, and left him holding on to the back of a chair while he rang for a bottle of Apollinaris. A marquis in his nightgown, with bleared eyes and tumbled hair, and something very like a bristly shadow encircling his chin, is not a venerable sight, and we will hurry him into his fashionable clothes as quickly as possible. Even Queen Victoria herself would be taken at a disadvantage if seen in dressing-gown and curl-papers.

Mr. Tagg performed the office of valet to his lordship in a masterly manner. He was a short, stout little man, with bullet head and watery-blue eyes. He had spent a large part of his life as attorney's clerk, until this more distinguished and lucrative employment had fallen in his way. His manner with his master was very familiar, probably because, as the old proverb expresses it, "No one is a hero to his valet."

Let us look at the marquis, our hero,—for of course he is to be the hero of this brief romance,—as he is sitting before the glass while Tagg combs his hair. His lordship is very tall and thin. A large beaked nose seems to have usurped more than its share of his face, and to have quite dwarfed the forehead, which is low and receding. His mouth is masked behind an enormous black mustache which



THE MARQUIS.

arches down to his chin and ends in two sharp points resembling waxed rat-tails. The monotony of an abnormally long neck is gracefully broken by a prominent Adam's-apple. His eyes are mud-colored, and at the present moment half closed.

"A little more red stuff there," says his lordship, pointing with his finger to his right cheek; and Tagg artistically rubs on the *rouge*, hiding, as far as possible, the paleness that is lurking there. It would not be proper for the nineteenth scion of a noble English family to go among his American cousins without some traces of the proverbial red cheeks of his countrymen.

Finally he is dressed to suit his aristocratic taste. The bottle of Apollinaris has been drunk, and has performed its goodly office of pacifier, and the marquis turns to open two or three letters that are lying on the table. The first is written on glossy paper; the envelope bears a crest and a complicated scroll, which a clever guesser might have interpreted "M. S." With Tagg's aid the marquis discovered that it contained an invitation to dine with Mr. and Mrs. Speedwell on the following Thursday. "The hold duffer has been pretty quick," remarked Playthenave, with an attempted smile. "We've no other hengagements for Thursday, have we, Tagg?"

“Not as I know hof,” rejoins the latter, who takes a paper-covered volume entitled “The Fashionable Letter-Writer,” from a drawer, and forthwith indites an acceptance in a bold, clerkly hand.

CHAPTER III.

IN WHICH THE MARQUIS DINES OUT.



IN especially good spirits was Mr. Speedwell on the following Thursday evening, when about seven o'clock he paced up and down the library of his Beacon Street house, waiting eagerly for the arrival of his guest. The door-bell gave a loud ring, and Mr. S.

carefully peered out into the entry, only to find that it had been a beggar asking alms.

"What a fool I am," he mused ; "of course his lordship would not have rung in so vulgar a manner."

Two or three other persons set him upon a like tiptoe of expectation, but they proved to be the news-



MRS. SPEEDWELL, — THE MOTHER OSTRICH.

paper carrier, and a stupid confectioner's boy, who should have known better than to ring at the front door.

Finally, the august guest himself was ushered in. The butler was particularly assiduous in helping him to remove his wraps, and in leading him to the drawing-room. Then he went to announce the arrival to Mr. Speedwell, whom he found bending over the key-hole, his face beaming at the sight of the marquis.

A moment later, Mr. Speedwell was shaking his guest warmly by the hand, and hoping that his lordship was quite well, while the butler, Jeames (his real name was Patrick, but Jeames was much more euphonious), was returning to the pantry muttering to himself, "Where have I seen that feller's face before?"

Presently there was heard the rustling and crackling of a silk dress, and the far from light, though stately, tread of a lady descending the stairs. A shadow fell across the threshold of the drawing-room door, and Mrs. Speedwell entered, accompanied by a tall and rather handsome girl.

As when the mother ostrich, on the red sands of Sahara, walks, with head erect and neck upright and haughty gait, surveying from sublime height, with maternal pride, the young bird that follows her, the

beholder clearly feels that he is in the presence of the mistress of the domain,—such was the entrance of Mrs. Speedwell and her daughter. And if we can conceive of a giraffe being introduced to the majestic bird at this point, the comparison might not inaptly apply to Lord Playthenave, who, though taller in stature than the lady, was far inferior to her in that indefinite quality known as “presence.”

I have somewhere seen a picture of the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers, in which the Puritan ladies are represented in *décolletées* dresses and long trains, about to leap upon the icy crags of Plymouth. The men are standing stolidly by, with halberds and large ruffs and small-crown hats, looking doubtingly at the surf. As the painting is by one of our first artists, I do not dare to criticise its historical accuracy; but I allude to it as a proof that even in those early times the mother-stock of our people were as dauntless and as conspicuous for their good taste in dress as they are to-day. Mrs. Speedwell was just the woman whom you could imagine might have jumped into a pinnace in evening dress, and pulled for the shore, regardless of snow and cold, distancing all her companions in the “Mayflower.” Indeed, the marquis learned several times during the evening that both her ancestors and her husband’s were passengers

on that famous vessel, — in what capacity he was not told, — and he remarked to Tagg, on returning to his hotel, that the “‘Mayflower’ must ’ave been bigger than the ‘Great Heastern,’ for all Boston came hover hin ’er.”

But there was no stiffness visible in the reception that the marquis received here. He was pressed with questions about his numerous friends, and was forced to repeat that really ridiculously funny incident about the Prince of Wales and the sponge-cake, which he had seen with his own eyes. His stronghold in conversation lay in dogs and horses; but Mrs. Speedwell, for this evening at least, was amiably interested in that noblest of animals, the horse, and her daughter was a passionate admirer of dogs, especially pugs.

The dinner was sumptuous and appropriate. Large joints, Yorkshire pudding, and tarts were served in profusion, to remind his lordship of the generous banquets that the mother-country is wont to spread before her children. The Queen’s health was dutifully drunk, and his lordship gracefully responded, that he should “make it ’is first dooty on returning ’ome to hinform ’Er Majesty of the cordial welcome he ’ad received in the States.”

Miss Speedwell sighed audibly, and looked across

the table with languid eyes at the marquis opposite. "Ah, how I envy you!" she said fervently. "How I envy you, who will return to that great and noble kingdom! There, one is appreciated; there, birth and education win the respect, the recognition, that is their due. How *I* should like to go to England!"

Mrs. Speedwell, who was watching, with all a mother's anxiety, the impression her daughter was producing on the marquis, thought she saw a blush mantling the latter's cheeks; at any rate, he cast down his eyes and looked sheepish,—more sheepish than usual. Silence at this point certainly was a good symptom, and when a little later Playthenave accidentally touched Miss Agatha's foot under the table, and begged her pardon, the two parents exchanged one of those meaning looks, which volumes cannot describe.

After the ladies had left the table, Mr. Speedwell whispered to Jeames, who presently brought a decanter, and filled the gentlemen's glasses.

"This, I flatter myself," quoth the host, "is a wine that will please your lordship."

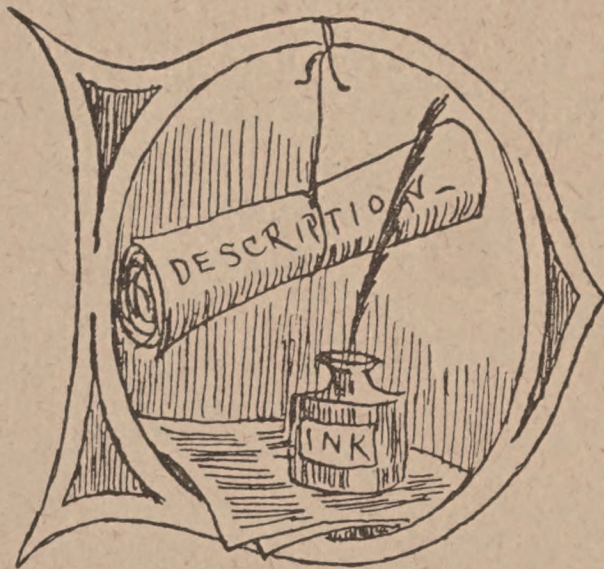
"Yes, that is doosid fine 'Ock, you know," replied the latter, draining his glass at one gulp,—"*doosid fine.*" Mr. Speedwell looked up chagrined. To have his cobwebby 1824 Madeira called hock was indeed

a blow ; but he was so good-natured that he could not take offence, and he charitably attributed the mistake to a slip of the tongue.

The remainder of the evening was pleasantly passed in the drawing-room. Miss Agatha carried on a long and one-sided conversation with the guest, and the old people sat and watched her success. When the time came for Playthenave to go, he was pressed to favor the humble Speedwell dwelling with his presence frequently, and he had no reason to doubt the sincerity of the invitation.

CHAPTER IV.

IN WHICH THE MESHES BEGIN TO ENCIRCLE THE
MARQUIS.



ON'T you think, my dear," remarked Mr. Speedwell to his wife, when they had retired, "that the marquis was really captivated with our daughter?"

"And, indeed, why shouldn't he be, Mr. S.?" replied his better half.

"I detest snobs, and am sure that Agatha is fit to be any lord's wife—"

"Hush, my dear, you insist on going ahead too fast."

"And you, Mr. S., are continually underrating our position. Surely *my* daughter may aspire to the highest alliance in the world."

No doubt, at that very moment, the young lady in



MISS SPEEDWELL.

FROM A CAMEO FORMERLY OWNED BY THE MARQUIS.

question was lulling herself to sleep with dreams of levees at Carlton House, with herself the admired of all beholders, and of a coronet, and a carriage with a real crest on it (her father's carriage had a crest and coronet, of course, but some persons in this wretchedly republican country would insist that such insignia were hardly in keeping with our boasted principles of equality). No doubt Miss Agatha felt confident that by her natural feminine talent for coquetry, and by the judicious guidance of her more experienced mamma, Lord Playthenave must unavoidably fall into the meshes that were being woven around him. And yet there was always the weariness of suspense to be endured. And he, meanwhile, on his return to the "Brunswick," expressed himself fully satisfied with his evening's work.

"You'd 'ardly believe it, Tagg, but, dull as I am, I kept the hold folks and the girl laughing the 'ole hevening. They heven said I was too hawfully clever for anything."

"They can't 'ave seen much 'umor," replied Tagg, as usual, in a surly tone. "But go in and win, now you've got a chance, and remember your promise."

His lordship looked as though the reference to this promise had cast a chill upon him. His voice quavered a little as he answered, "Now don't always

hallude to that. Hof course I'll keep my word, but let bygones be bygones."

It is not to be supposed that Lord Playthenave was received only by the Speedwells, for that was far from being the case. His friend Leverett, to whom he had brought letters of introduction, and by whom he was put up at the Club, was quite as assiduous as any one in showing him attention. Invitations poured in from many and very opposite quarters. Elderly club gentlemen, who spent most of their time looking out of the windows upon the trees that were donning their foliage in the Common; politicians, who were brimful with news from Washington, and who regarded the ministry at the Court of St. James as the *summum bonum* of life; journalists, who by their pens were carving out a reputation; and literary and artistic magnates,—all fell before the feet of the distinguished visitor. He, at least, could not say that Boston was inhospitable and unappreciative; for, varied as were his hosts, they all acknowledged that he was the very essence of wit and refinement.

Naturally enough, mothers with marriageable daughters were among the most numerous of his entertainers. Not, of course, that they expected that their daughters would fall in love with him, but they

thought it would be well for them to see a thorough English gentleman, and enjoy the refining influence of his acquaintance.

Mrs. Speedwell, we may be sure, was too clever a woman of the world not to fear that his lordship's inclinations might be led away from Agatha amid all this excitement. Men are fickle, as she had assured Mr. Speedwell a thousand times; and she was particularly careful to get accurate accounts of the marquis's behavior at the places he visited. Although all her information tended to allay rather than to arouse suspicion, she still felt insecure, and, like a skilful general who feels assured of his own superiority, she determined to bring about an engagement as speedily as possible.

Mr. Speedwell, too, disliked to feel that he had competitors for the good graces of Playthenave. He had been the first to receive him; he had shaved his whiskers, and was now growing a mustache, to imitate his lordship; he even dropped an "h" occasionally, as if to show how readily he fell in with the language of the nobility. Now, there were others emulating him in imitating this common model. There were others who had learned his lordship's anecdotes, and were vying with him in repeating them. This was unbearable: Mayflower

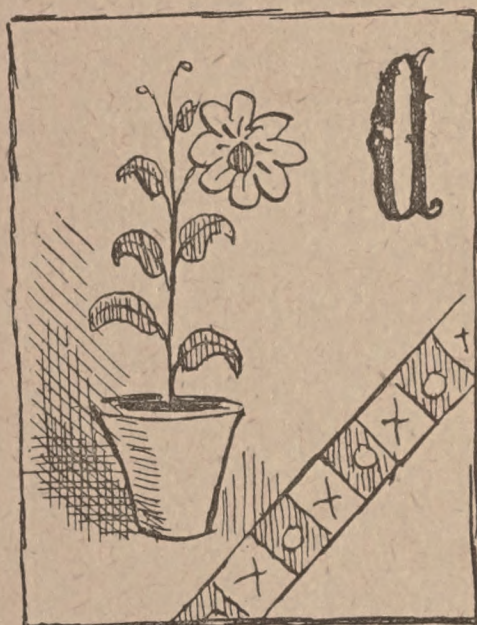
Speedwell, like Julius Cæsar, could not be second in Rome.

So Mrs. Speedwell and her husband—the sexes were usually named in this order by those who knew them best—consulted together about the best means of accomplishing their desired aims, and the result was soon made known to the fashionable world in an item in a Sunday paper: “We learn on the best authority that Lord Playthenave will be the guest of Mayflower Speedwell, Esq., at his Newport villa, where the latter gentleman will repair with his beautiful wife and daughter next week.”

But before this plan was carried out, his lordship had several important experiences, which must now be laid before the reader.

CHAPTER V.

IN WHICH JEALOUSY TRIES TO BREAK THE WEB.



GATHA SPEEDWELL had an acquaintance, — or rather, in young ladies' parlance, "a dear friend," — Miss Aspasia Standish. The Standishes were on quite as good a social plane as the Speedwells, but their bank account was small. Nevertheless, they did not aspire to lead society by the mere charms of filthy lucre. Not they. They were passionately fond of art, — of the Fine Arts in their most æsthetic ramifications, — and were the recognized heads of a very select and accomplished circle. Mr. Rococo Standish, the first of the family, was well advanced in middle life ; and although he had never painted a picture, he had acquired great reputation as an



MISS ASPASIA STANDISH, — THE INTENSE!

art *connoisseur*. Every one in his coterie was convinced that if Standish had condescended to use his brush, he must have inevitably risen above all the other masters of his time. Mrs. Standish centred her hopes in Aspasia, interspersed her conversations with a great number of French and Italian phrases, and often alluded to her long sojourn abroad. Miss Aspasia, for her part, was thrilled by the transcendental beauties of Pre-raphaelitism. Select evening parties — on “intellectual symposia,” as they were called by those who attended them — took place once a month at Mr. Standish’s dwelling, and to one of these the marquis was invited.

The company that was assembled that evening was a remarkable one, — indeed, as Mrs. Standish modestly confided to Playthenave, none but *paragons d’esprit* were to be met with at her *soirées*. When he entered the drawing-room, which was chastely devoid of luxurious furniture, and painted in faded greens and browns (“soul tints,” as Miss Aspasia called them), he interrupted a song that a thin, sharp-nosed lady was playing at the piano. The piece was one of Chopin’s; and after all the guests had been presented to the “distinguished visitor and patron of art,” the lady proceeded. Who can describe the wonderful gymnastic feats that she performed on the instru-

ment? You must unavoidably have thought that she was a Fury attacking a mortal enemy. One, two, three, and even four octaves were dashed over like lightning. A tremendous blow called forth a bellow from the bass note, and then, for a moment, it seemed as though the monster were silenced. The treble warbled a few humiliated tones, as if surrendering to superior force; and then suddenly the bass was attacked with redoubled vigor. How she hurried up and down the scale! How her crab-like fingers pranced and glided and thumped over the keys! What cause could the patient instrument ever have given her for such a display of wrath? How many years of practice with dumb-bells did it take to put such strength in her thin, bony arms? And yet, when the end came, and the piano was fairly annihilated, she arose, apparently the most unconcerned and unfatigued of mortals.

"Rapturous melodies!" exclaimed an inane young man, with snub nose and large mouth, who had been turning the leaves for the performer.

"A sublime *adagio* that!" chimed in Mrs. Standish, who came forward to compliment the heroine of the moment. "It reminds one of the grand *tout-ensemble* of a Gothic *duomo*."

"Yes, Chopin certainly knew how to arouse those

iridescent vibrations of harmony, that lie dormant in the recesses of the soul," added Mr. Twaddle, who was the philosopher *par excellence* of the coterie.

Meanwhile Miss Aspasia had been paying the marquis a great deal of attention. Their conversation was unintentionally amusing, as may be gathered from one or two short quotations.

"Don't you adore Dante?" asked the young lady.

"I never hate any," responded the marquis in sober earnest. "Is that a local dish, like your Boston baked beans?"

"Oh no, Dante was a great master of poetry, the Homer of Italy, the Apollo of—"

"Oh yes, I remember Hapollo won the 'Hoaks' three seasons ago. Fine, brown stallion."

Miss Aspasia took no notice of the slight blunder. She was either too well-bred, or too far above the clouds at this moment, to descend to such trivial matters. She was bent on making a convert of the marquis to Pre-raphaelitism. A less ardent proselyter than herself would have despaired at the repeated rebuffs she received from the latter's ignorance. He knew nothing of Giotto, or gargoyles, or Ruskin, or Turner's "Slave Ship"; and he thought that by William Morris she meant Billy Morris, the famous Manchester "pet," who fought sixty-three rounds with

the "Sheffield Chicken." Still she persevered. She was sure that if his fortunes were allied to those of some whole-souled, æsthetic woman, he too would develop a love for the Beautiful. In an ante-room she showed him a picture, illuminated by many jets of gas, of a carrot and a string of onions, placed in a common earthen jug. "That," she exclaimed, "is the climax of art! How thankful we should be to the master spirit who has here revealed to us this ideal of perfectibility!"

The marquis said nothing, but he thought of those colored prints of hunting-scenes, where all the men are in scarlet jackets, and all the ladies in beavers. Then Aspasia deftly referred to her dear friend, Miss Speedwell, deploring her love of the vanities of the world, and her ignorance of pure intellectuality. She was sure his lordship appreciated the sublime too much to be fascinated by such paltry tinsel; she was certain that he could never be happy with a wife who could not satisfy his aspirations after the abysmal blisses of Truth. Then she looked at him with those cerulean eyes of hers, and began to think that she had made a convert. And then she led him back to the drawing-room, where a young man with long hair was reading an ode to Villon.

When the guests had departed, her mother clasped

her to her bosom, exclaiming that she had always said the *élite* of England were the most *sympatiqués* and appreciative gentlemen in the world. And her father patted her on the head, and called her lovingly his little marchioness.

CHAPTER VI.

IN WHICH FEMININE TEARS PROVE EFFICACIOUS.



P to the present moment I have merely narrated the chief incidents in Lord Playthenave's sojourn at Boston, but I have abstained from passing comment upon them; for my intention is to relate the facts, and not to criticise them. I leave it for my readers to discover upon what principles of human nature the marquis's popularity with the *élite* was based. For my own part I never could regard him as anything but an illiterate bore; but since the Speedwells and the Leveretts and the Standishes, and hosts of others, were unremitting in their attention to him, I presume that my estimate of his character was a wrong one. Of course, all these

distinguished children of a free and enlightened country could not have been attracted to Playthenave from the mere fact that he was a marquis: to impute such a motive to their actions would be unkind, if not presumptuous.

Mrs. Speedwell was vexed at the reception Playthenave had met with from the Standishes. One of those good friends of the world at large, who spend their time in retailing news, had given her a full account of the symposium, not forgetting to lay great stress on the interest that the marquis had manifested in Miss Standish's Pre-raphaelitism; and Mrs. Speedwell was once more stretched upon the rack of suspense. Of course a nobleman of Playthenave's lineage would bestow his hand and heart irrespective of monetary considerations, for had he not often mentioned that he should never marry for money, as he had already quite enough revenue from his Sussex manors? And was he not especially earnest in denouncing the actions of some of his countrymen, who come to America to hunt up heiresses? In her perplexity and vexation Mrs. Speedwell, like the truly affectionate mother that she was, vented her spleen upon Agatha.

"It is all your fault, miss!" she scolded. "You, who have a fine education, fine manners and personal

attractions, allow yourself to be eclipsed by that mawkish doll, Aspasia Standish. Whom am I working for but for you? Have you not told me a hundred times that you could never be happy with any man but the marquis? And after I try my best to further your welfare, you disappoint me utterly."

"But, mamma, I assure you," interposed Agatha meekly, "I have done everything that I could. I have flattered the marquis — as you told me; I have learned all the sporting terms and the names of all the winning horses, and I have given him a great many — many opportunities to — to propose — but —" here the young lady burst into tears, and the conversation was interrupted by the servant, who announced that his lordship was in the drawing-room.

Five minutes later, Miss Speedwell descended, with her eyes still red and swollen, her mother having assured her that, unless he was a heartless monster, it would help matters for him to see her unhappy. And so it did. Playthenave had never been more genial than on that day, and when Agatha begged him to write some verses in her album, he kindly consented.

"You write a beautiful hand," said she, "as I know from that first note you sent in answer to the invitation to dinner."

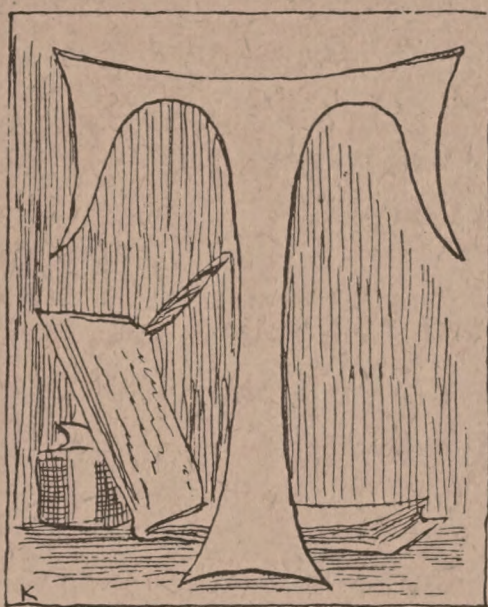
"Yas, really it's quite necessary for us at 'ome to

write well, don't you know?" he replied, internally reflecting that all his correspondence had been done by Tagg.

He took the album with him, promising to return it on the following day, when they were to meet to start for Newport.

CHAPTER VII.

IN WHICH THE MARQUIS TAKES NEWPORT BY STORM.



O have seen Tagg and the marquis working over the poem that was to grace Miss Speedwell's book would have afforded a great deal of amusement. Neither of these gentlemen had had any experience in verse-making, and their attempts at rhyme and metre would have put the smallest school-boy to shame. At last, after having had recourse to rhymed advertisements in the newspapers and to the vocabulary in some hunting ballads with which the marquis was familiar, they evolved the following, which was duly written in Tagg's most clerkly hand : —

TO THE UNKNOWN.

The horse that wins the Derby day,
And pants beside the goal,

Is not more pleasing to my eyes
Than her whose praise I've told.

She is as stately as a queen,
Her virtues are as many ;
Until her features I had seen,
No maiden loved I any.

But if I thought she did n't love,
Or heard it from her tongue,
I'd go and die in some vast waste,
And there throw up the sponge.

"Ah, how sweet!" whispered the young lady, for whom these verses were written, to their author, as they were hurrying in the train towards Newport on the morrow.

"Pray, who is it that has captivated you thus?" The marquis looked modest, and simpered; Agatha blushed; Mr. and Mrs. Speedwell exchanged knowing glances.

"I think it is all right now, mamma," Agatha said in an undertone a little later, leaning over to her mother.

"That's a dear, good, obedient child," replied the maternal ostrich, smiling on her fledgling.

Newport society was at its height when the arrival of the Speedwells and their noble guest became

known. Lawn tennis, polo, yachting, and parties succeeded each other with such rapidity that the most persistent seeker after pleasure could not hope to enjoy them all. And yet, with that cosmopolitan politeness which is distinctive of the great watering-place, society redoubled its efforts to show due respect to the new-comer. To be sure, Newport already boasted of a French count and a German baron, and one or two ambassadors ; but a real English marquis was as conspicuous an object for attention as any of them. So Playthenave was dined and wined ; he was asked to award the magnificent cup won in the last race ; he was pressed to have a run with the hounds after an imaginary fox ; he was one of the judges in the polo match, and he was bowed to from all the four-in-hands on the Avenue. And yet, notwithstanding these distinctions, he bore his popularity with true modesty. People would have been rather pleased than otherwise if he had shown some conceit at his success, but he accepted his position with a stolidity that would have done credit to an early Christian martyr. Only mothers who had aspirations for their daughters declared that the marquis must be pre-occupied, — his affections must be already engaged ; and they looked at Miss Speedwell with spiteful glances that one might cast upon a Clytemnæstra.

Still, their attentions were unremitted, and after ten days of continuous entertaining, the marquis remarked, that "heven in Lunnun he 'ad n't 'ad a jollier time of it."

The frowns had already left Mrs. Speedwell's alabaster brow ; she was condescendingly polite to every one. Agatha was happy and smiling. Mayflower Speedwell was delighted to be — what he had never been before — the most sought after of all the frequenters of the Casino. But alarm once more spread itself into their household when the report that the Standishes would arrive in town at the end of the week, was verified.

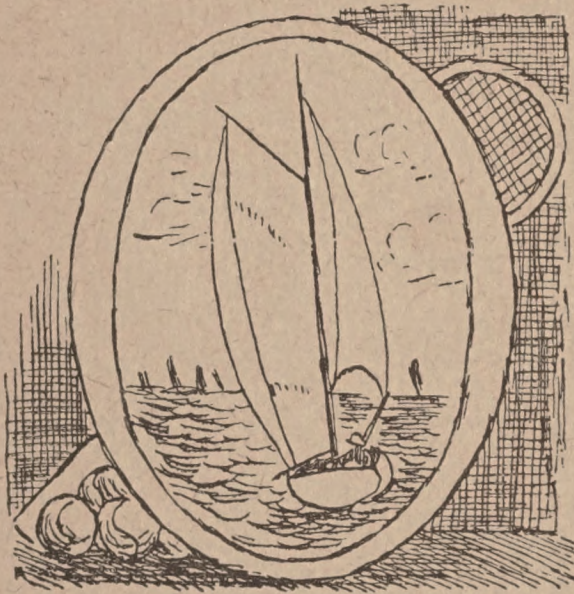
"Agatha," said Mrs. S. sternly, after she had made sure of the truth of the news, "you must bring matters to a climax, — and at once!" There was no mistaking the meaning of this injunction ; the Duke of Wellington could not have been more firm and determined at Waterloo.

The next day there was to be a lawn-party at the Mt. Desert-Newportes, and the Speedwells were of course invited. The Newportes were noted for their elegant entertainments, and although they were looked down upon socially by a great many people, no one refused their hospitality. It is one of the cosmopolitan rules of etiquette never to refuse the

invitation of a man who has the best champagne in town, — even if he happens to have been a California gold-digger, and to wear a large diamond pin in his bosom. Besides, the younger Newport generation were pleasant people, — the son and heir being especially prominent in playing polo, while his sisters were reputed the best horsewomen in the city.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN WHICH CUPID WINS THE DAY.



ON the morrow came a beautiful July day. Cloudless blue sky, a dim haze over the water, studded with white sails, and a faint breeze that just rippled through the foliage, — left nothing to be desired. The Newport villa was gorgeously

decorated, the walks were carefully trimmed, the grass was fresh and green from frequent sprinkling. The old millionaire received his guests in a free and easy manner, shaking them all cordially by the hand, and bidding them enjoy themselves. A beautiful sight it was to see the lawns and walks, sloping gracefully towards the cliffs, decked with ladies in Parisian gar-

ments, and gentlemen languidly paying them attentions. The low murmurs of the waves below, the occasional ringing laugh of some young girl, the noiseless gliding of the solemn waiters, laden with silver salvers and wines and ices, and the music stealing from an orchestra hidden in a copse, — all combined to make a scene that a modern Watteau might revel in.

In a little arbor, screened from observation, Agatha Speedwell was sitting with the marquis. The former seemed pensive and taciturn: the latter was in a peculiarly vivacious mood — for him. Miss Speedwell attempted several times to converse, but soon fell into silence. Playthenave smoked a cigar, as his companion did not object (she never objected to anything he did), and kept time to the distant music by swaying his head.

At last the young lady, looking down and playing with her fan, sighed.

“I ’ope you ’re not cold,” remarked the marquis.

“Oh no, Adolphus — your lordship, I mean,” she replied, with repeated sighs, “I was thinking how unhappy I am. How wretched any girl is who is thwarted in — in love. My parents insist that I must marry an American, while my heart is already conquered by — by one of your countrymen!”

“And who is he?” asked Playthenave.

“I cannot tell — it must be a secret till my dying day ; for he would not have me if I asked — ”

“Do you — do you mean me?” exclaimed his lordship, suddenly awakening to a conviction that the moment had arrived for the realization of all his hopes.

Agatha blushed and whispered, “Yes, will you accept me?”

Let us draw the veil over the sacredness of this scene, for who could adequately depict such tenderness, such passion.

Before the party had dispersed that evening it was whispered abroad that Miss Speedwell was formally engaged to the marquis, and her fears that her parents would not permit the match were groundless. Strangely enough, it was also hinted that the young lady herself, in utter disregard of the time-worn custom, had made the proposal ; but this, as the reader who has heard the conversation will acknowledge, must have been calumny, originating with some disappointed mamma or daughter.

Agatha's parents expressed great surprise and satisfaction when they were officially informed of the suit.

“Ah me ! how sly you men are,” quoth Mrs. Speed-

well, with a twinkle in her eyes. "And who would ever have thought that you were really passionately in love with my dear daughter! And how cruel of you to rob me of her, too! You are heartless wretches to steal away our only comfort in this way. However, I shall try to forgive you, Adolphus."

"But, mamma, I am sure you did n't think papa so cruel when he stole your affections," artfully interposed Agatha, pressing her adorer's hand.

It will be unnecessary to dwell in detail upon the preparations that were at once set on foot for the young couple's marriage. The marquis was good enough to leave everything to the discretion of his future bride's parents, only insisting that the ceremony should take place as speedily as possible. If he had had more time, he would have liked to send to England to have his brother and the Duke of Damphshire come over to be at the wedding; but even this pleasure he was willing to deny himself, so eager was he not to have the happy day delayed. In a conversation between him and Mr. Speedwell he learned that Miss Agatha's portion would be about fifteen thousand a year during the lifetime of her parents, after which she would become sole heiress to the Speedwell estate. "Like the true gentleman that he is," Mr. S. remarked to his wife, "the marquis expressed himself



TAGG, — THE VILLAIN.

completely satisfied with this outlook, and declared that if the young lady had been penniless, it would have made no difference in his affection."

So the marriage preparations were hastened with all due speed. Milliners, lace-makers, dress-makers, and an army of lesser female artisans were mustered into the service; presents flowed in from all sides, and engagement-dinners were forced down the young people's throats to satiety. Every one was happy in the large circle of friends and acquaintances excepting Tagg. The faithful valet, ever since the evening when he had learned the amount of Agatha's dowry, had been surly and discontented. Poor, honest Tagg! he undoubtedly was grieved to have his master throw himself away on any woman. Just before the wedding it was rumored that he and Playthenave had indulged in an altercation, and that the latter had discharged his valet, but had reconsidered and apologized. People will circulate such odd stories, even about a marquis! As though, forsooth, Tagg was of enough importance at this crisis to be quarrelled with or conciliated!

The time arrived for the marriage. The ceremony was carried out with fitting magnificence; the bride looked lovely and wore orange-blossoms; the groom was handsome and stately; Mrs. Speedwell buried her

face in her handkerchief, and performed the customary task of all mothers at weddings, of weeping, without tears ; Mayflower Speedwell was sublime. Then all Newport attended the reception, and ate, and gossiped, and kissed the bride, and the young men, as is *en règle* now, drank too much champagne. Every one was merry, and almost every one regretted that such weddings as this did not come oftener.

And in the evening the bridal company drove to see the pair safely on board of the New York steamer, after slippers had been thrown and the health of the marchioness had been drunk. Only one person was absent from all this festivity, and that was Tagg. The steamer moved away from the pier, and started on its voyage into the darkness, and the happy pair had said the last good-by, — but still no Tagg. Where could he be ?

CHAPTER IX.

IN WHICH THERE IS AN ANTICLIMAX AND AN END.



WAS a dark, cheerless morning. Mist drizzling in leaden sheets, covering everything with cold clammy moisture. The Newport steamer looms up through the wet, and sullenly draws up to its wharf. Three men, with their overcoats buttoned up to the chin, and their hats dripping, stand near the gangway, evidently waiting for some one.

"That's them," whispers the shortest of the three to his companions, as Lord Playthenave emerges from the cabin, with his wife hanging upon his arm, and prepares to go on shore. Scarcely has his foot touched the planking before one of the harpies has taken his right arm, and muttered in an undertone, "It's all up; we've got you now. You had better come along quietly."

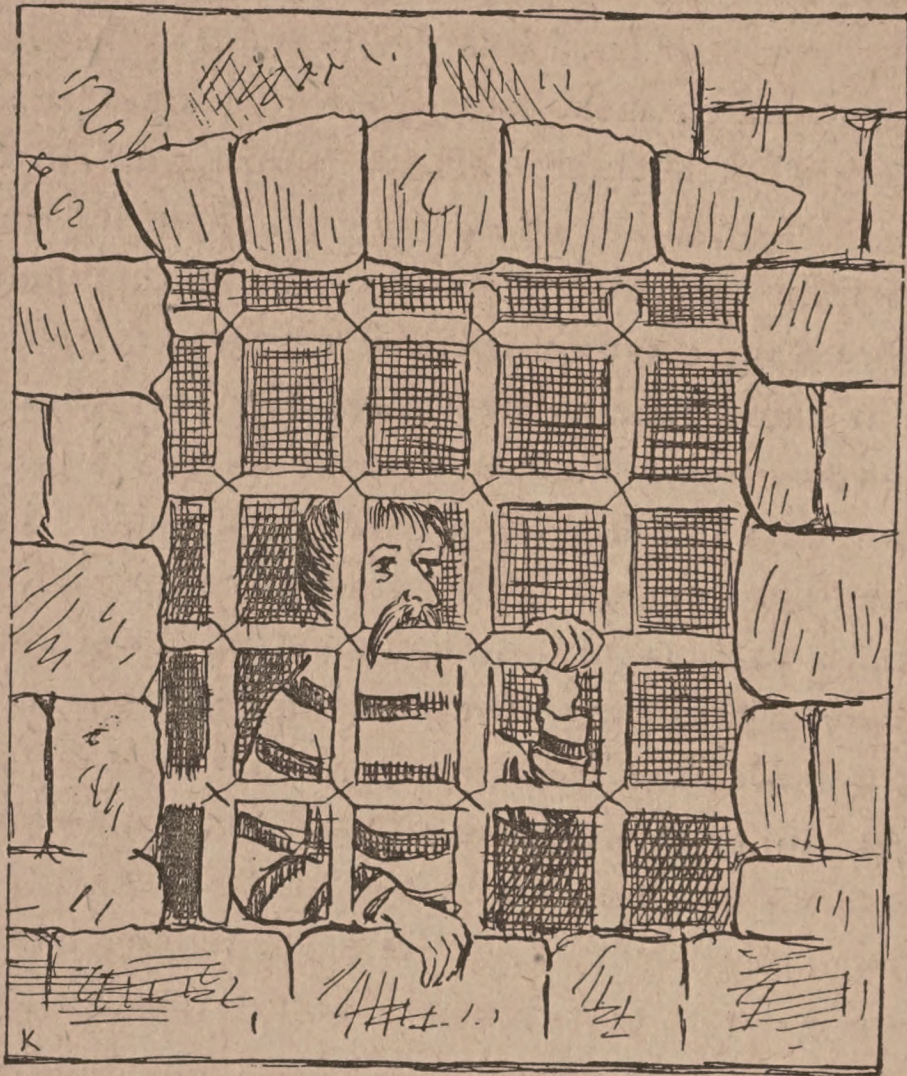
Playthenave's usually expressionless face instantly wore a look of despair, quickly followed by an expression of feigned incredulity and bravado. "Let me pass, man!" he exclaimed. "Your hinsolence would be chastised if this lady were not 'ere."

The second detective and Tagg — for Tagg it was — had already confronted him. "It's no use, Jenkins. Don't resist, it will only place the marchioness in a disagreeable hattitude," said he, with mock pity. Agatha was already alarmed. Playthenave made one more attempt at intimidation, and demanded what grounds "these 'ounds 'ad for harresting 'im." "We've the warrant here," replied the first detective, feeling in his pocket. The crowd had by this time collected, and was passing ironical remarks upon the unlucky bridegroom. Agatha clung closer to her husband, and the five were soon being rapidly driven in a closed carriage to the Tombs.

There explanations followed that must have made the marchioness appreciate the truth of the trite saying, that "titles are empty." The Marquis of Playthenave, or Edward Jenkins, as his name appeared on the police books, was arrested for forgery. He had spent the early part of his life as attendant on the Earl of C——, and had accompanied this nobleman on his trip through the United States. Naturally

shrewd, though ignorant, he conceived the not altogether original project of returning to this country disguised as a gentleman, and of entrapping some heiress. He grounded his hopes on the headlong manner in which most Americans rush for a title, — and with what success has been pointed out in this sketch. Tagg, a man of no more principle but more brains than himself, was his companion, and helped to keep up the disguise. All went well until Jenkins, when it came time to depart for Newport with the Speedwells, found himself wanting in ready money, and forged a check upon a New York bank. Tagg, who had been made a confidant of this crime, but who was not a participant in it, had divulged the secret on the very afternoon of the wedding, and the arrest which followed was the result.

Such, in brief, were the charges against our hero. To describe the action of his wife when she became convinced of their truth, would savor too much of the melodramatic to suit this bare and unvarnished tale. She insisted, even after her husband had confessed, that there must be some mistake ; that her father would pay the amount of the forgery a thousand times over ; that Tagg was a liar and impostor. But most earnestly did she cling to the title of her husband, — she was sure that he was a marquis, whatever his



EDWARD JENKINS,— IN HIS PRESENT RESIDENCE.

faults might have been ; and when that last prop was taken from her, overcome by wounded pride, shame, and anger, she sank speechless into a chair.

And Tagg, why had he been instrumental in causing such an unpleasant after-marriage scene ? That, too, was soon made clear. When Playthenave learned the amount that his wife was to bring him, with all the greediness begotten by unexpected success, he refused to share the winnings with his valet. Threats, entreaties, and commands were alike futile, and when Tagg was told that he was to receive only five hundred pounds or nothing, he vowed revenge against his faithless companion. He had nothing to gain and nothing to lose by confessing, while he felt the pleasure that a vindictive spirit takes in gaining its end, even at the cost of its own liberty.

So Jenkins — marquis no longer — was taken away to his cell, his just now affectionate bride having recovered sufficiently to refuse him a parting kiss, which he asked for in a plaintive tone ; and Agatha was left in her distress to await the arrival of her father, and meditate on the vanity of human wishes and the perfidy of men.

We may be sure that the news of this startling event soon reached Newport. We can imagine, too, how Mr. Speedwell felt like those little wanton boys

that Shakespeare speaks of; and how Mrs. S. declared, between paroxysms of maternal grief, that she had always detested and suspected that man; and how the kind friends who had but lately partaken of the marriage meats, not yet cold, whispered to each other that they had always predicted that the haughty Speedwells would have a fall; and how loving mammas were glad that their daughters knew a villain from a gentleman. These and similar remarks one expects to hear from the world, but I fancy that the very next English lord who comes over here will have just as many admirers, and mayhap as many victims, as Lord Playthenave.

Human nature is easily disturbed on the surface, but remains unchanged below, and no doubt the day is yet far off when human trout shall cease to rise to gilded flies.

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